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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author traces the development of the community school movement in the U. S. Examples of successful programs in various areas are presented and the role of the local community and the local school district in the community education movement is stressed. The author addresses himself to the role that the department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Office of Education are playing in the development of community education and outlines several governmental programs from which funds for community education may be available. The speech concludes with a discussion of the role community schools can play in career education. (DN)

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: NEW HOPE FOR EDUCATION*

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At a time when many Americans feel increasingly removed from the functioning of their Governments at the Federal, State and local levels, concerned citizens and Government agencies have begun searching for new ways to bring Government and its many services closer to the people they are designed to serve.

In looking around for already existing institutions and channels that might be used to achieve this goal, many of our more discerning citizens have been struck by the fact that the vast majority of our population -- be they urbanites, suburbanites, or residents of rural communities -- already live in close proximity to two widely disparate types of Government facilities: the Federal postoffice and the local school.

These two venerable institutions affect the lives of virtually every American, and for many years they have done so in traditional and easy to understand ways. But things are changing!

For example, the postal service -- while still mainly concerned with moving the U.S. mail -- has recently begun capitalizing on its status as the most convenient, obvious and sometimes only Federal facility in a given community. The most recent move toward diversification of these facilities is a newly initiated pilot program which permits citizens to make passport applications at their nearby postoffice, thus being spared the often inconvenient trip to the Federal courthouse — wherever that may be.

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At the same time, our schools -- while still largely engaged in the education of our traditional school-age population -- have begun to realize that they have wider obligations to the community at large, and that these obligations go beyond a once-a-year closing for instant conversion to election-day polling places.

The soaring costs of local Government — coupled with increased citizen awareness of, and interest in, Government-sponsored services -- have led Government officials to take a new look at the potential role that the school might play as a center of community activity and service. Over the past several years, a new concept -- that of community schools and community education -- has emerged and is receiving increased attention from large segments of the population.

It is receiving so much attention, in fact, that it has become more and more difficult to arrive at a single, commonly-accepted definition of just what a community school is. While all over the country community school sites vary in the types and number of services provided, I would like to offer the following definition which seems to me to embody the dominant elements found among existing programs:

> The community school is a means of meeting the cultural, educational, emotional, health, physical and social needs of all of the citizens in the community. The school is the center of a variety of activities all day long, all year round, for all citizens. It is an attempt to get the whole community into the school and to get the students into the whole community.

What this means, in effect, is that the schools are now grasping the opportunity for a new spirit of outreach in teaching new skills, in fulfilling more people intellectually, and in developing new interests among all age groups. Community education offers an opportunity for every person -- man, woman, child -- to continue his learning to the extent of his ability and interests.

What this means on a practical level is that the integration of social services with the schools represents a very basic attempt to redefine the neighborhood at the same time that it enlarges it and renders it less parochial. And the importance of this occurrence is especially evident when one examines its possible effect on those low-income areas which are presently in a state of decline.

A recent research study which was funded by the Office of Education took a close look at 10 school/community centers, most of which are planned for or are operating in low-income areas, and which are seen as attempts to revitalize the "quality of life" in declining neighborhoods. At one time these neighborhoods were unified by religion or race or class status, and they were enclaves that in one way or another apparently met the basic needs of the families residing there. At this time the public school was a respected institution which was believed capable of transforming lower class and immigrant children into middle class adults. Schooling was the primary service demanded of the Government, and other kinds of institutions served other kinds of needs reasonably well as measured against the expectations of the time.

This, however, is a portrait of things past. The current residents of these neighborhoods are entering the economy and attempting to achieve social mobility at a very different time in history. Low-skilled, low-paying jobs that might at least allow heads of families the hope of better lives for their children are not readily available, and the faith in the processes of mobility that once characterized these neighborhoods has been replaced by resignation and resentment. Instead of generation improving upon generation, each generation follows the last to nowhere. At the same time the school has increasingly come to be regarded as the first stop on that road to nowhere.

In an attempt to reverse this picture of frustration and decline, local schools and communities — with a remarkable lack of assistance from their State or Federal Governments -- have managed to develop and implement major programs of community education.

An outstanding example of this kind of local initiative and commitment is the John F. Kennedy School and Community Center, a $5 million project located in one of Atlanta's poorest areas. The Center is a functional three-story structure housing a middle school with accommdation for 1,000 students, recreation facilities, and 12 community agencies, with a previously constructed neighborhood health clinic nearby.

An exemplary model of social service integration, the Center opened its doors in February 1971, and has remained open on a seven-day-a-week, 12-month-a-year basis. It serves an area of high unemployment and marginal housing conditions where one fourth of all residents have incomes below $2,000 a year.

Services include social welfare, day care facilities, training for mentally retarded, social security, legal aid, municipal information services, vocational education rehabilitation programs, and an adult education program.

The brainchild of Atlanta school superintendent John Letson, the Center's most interesting feature is that close to 80 percent of its cost was borne by local school board funds and private foundation funds. Moreover, those Federal funds which were contributed came from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Neighborhood Facilities Grant Program -- not from the Office of Education.

A second example of a locally initiated plan for community education is the Human Resources Center, currently getting underway in Pontiac, Michigan. This new center, which is now only partially operative, received its original impetus from 300 parents who petitioned for the replacement of a 69-year-old elementary school which had become obsolete over the years. Their request, coupled with the need to replace approximately six other inner-city elementary schools, gave rise to the proposal that students and community members be provided with something more than just new buildings.

From the very outset of planning for the center, full community participation was sought and utilized, and a committee of 30 community members was formed which reflected the attitudes and interests of the whole community. The outcome of this planning effort was a blueprint which called for the construction of a single complex, which will ultimately

include an elementary school, a theater for the performing arts, a 650-seat auditorium, a public restaurant, exhibition rooms, a library, an adult education facility, doctors' and dentists' offices, employment and social security counseling, PTA conference rooms, administrative offices, small-group music auditoria, and a spectator gymnasium.

In other words, the residents of Pontiac are getting much more for their $5.5 million expenditure than simply six or seven new schools. Located in an integrated area which serves as a buffer between an all white and an all black neighborhood, the Center is providing this community with a whole array of facilities which built individually would have run into millions of dollars more. But even more important than the dollar cost savings is the fact that this center is designed so that the school is the nucleus of what will ultimately be a busy and viable center meeting the total needs of the family and the community.

And perhaps most significantly of all the residents of Pontiac, like those in Atlanta, wanted this center enough to issue a $4.5 million local bond issue which provided for the major cost of construction.

Now, you have probably noticed that in the course of my remarks here today, I have been laying some stress -- and some rather complimentary stress at that -- on the initiatives of local school systems in both the planning and the financing of these projects. This is because I believe that this kind of grassroots effort speaks well for the future of the community school movement. It means that citizens, schools and Government agencies are at last waking up to the fact that people and Government agencies <u>can</u> work together in ways which result in less duplication of services and considerable savings in tax dollars. It also means -- and

this I am most happy to announce -- that citizens and their local Governments have taken an important initiative by utilizing local resources and combining them with funds available through already existing Federal programs.

As you probably know, over the past 14 months, Congress has taken steps to introduce legislation which would have specifically provided funds for the encouragement and establishment of community schools. One such piece of legislation, the Community School Center Development Act, would have established -- among other things -- grant programs for higher education institutions and for local educational agencies.

Although this bill failed to pass in Congress, this failure should not indicate to you a lack of interest or support for community education from those of us in the Federal bureaucracy or from our colleagues on Capitol Hill. The initiatives of Senators Church and Williams -- who co-sponsored this bill in the U.S. Senate -- and the cooperation which they received from their fellow legislators speak well for the future of community education at the Federal level. And if you are looking for reassurances of interest and support in the executive branch the following statements by the Administration's two leading education spokesmen should be of considerable interest.

For example, Secretary Richardson has stated -- and I quote, "The community school experiments in Flint, Michigan, and other communities have proven to be promising innovations in several respects. The community school concept recognizes that public education is an integral and continuing

service for the entire community membership, regardless of age. In addition, community schools allow a more efficient use of public school facilities which otherwise stand useless after school hours."

Assistant Secretary for Education Marland has also voiced his strong support for community education. In an enthusiastic discussion of the subject he remarked, "Community education brings together people of all ages from diverse social and economic backgrounds and gives them an opportunity to learn in the geographic area in which they live. As a spirit of cooperation and an eagerness to learn develop, the barriers of prejudice begin to be broken down. Out of this kind of an atmosphere, solutions to some of the problems of the community begin to evolve."

From these remarks, it should be evident to you that HEW and the Office of Education are indeed both interested in, and enthusiastic about, community education and the community school concept. In fact, we have recently established an Ad Hoc Group to study the role of USOE in community school development, and that group -- chaired by my assistant deputy commissioner -- is expected to issue its report in the near future.

The areas which we have been examining over the last couple of months fall into three specific areas which I think will interest you. The questions they are attempting to answer are these:

1. What is USOE (and other Federal agencies) doing to encourage and support the community school concept?

2. What is a realistic Federal role (in particular that of USOE) in fostering community schools?

3. Can the Federal role be implemented under present legislation, and if not, what modification of present legislation or new legislation is needed to fulfill the Federal role?

While I cannot offer you definitive answers to these questions at the present moment, I am going to take a few minutes to describe for you the wide array of OE programs which currently can and do provide funds and services for the promotion of the community school concept.

A prime source of funds is Title III ESEA, under which you may develop school-community education projects to demonstrate innovative and exemplary practices. The Williams School Project, which is the showcase of Flint, Michigan, was partly financed through a Title III grant from the Office of Education, and a number of community school programs have been funded under the State-administered portion of this Title.

Secondly, under the Model Cities Program, administered cooperatively by the Office of Education and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, personnel can be employed and facilities and other resources provided in Model Neighborhoods for community participation in cultural and recreational activities. These programs may extend to other community agencies beyond the school, and these include museums and other cultural centers.

In addition, you have the Community Service and Continuing Education Programs, funded under Title I of the Higher Education Act, which can help in training community-school personnel through cooperative arrangements by a local school district and an institution of higher education. During 1971, the Office of Education funded 10 projects under the title for training of recreational personnel, and the legislation also permits the establishment

of off-campus learning centers which provide a wide range of services. Such services can be integrated into a broad community school program, and services can include high school equivalency educational programs and job conseling. During 1971 alone, 64 off-campus centers received Office of Education support.

Then there is Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act which permits the establishment of Community Learning Centers. These centers can be made available for a wide range of cultural, recreational, and self-developmental activities which could then be incorporated into a broad community-school program. The procedure here involves a cooperative undertaking between the public library and the local education agency, and various facilities -- including elementary and secondary school plants -- can be employed in the operation of the program.

A striking example of this kind of arrangement has occurred in Philadelphia, where a center has been established cooperatively by the public library and the school board with the use of combined funds under the Library Services and Construction Act and Titles I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In this instance, funds were also received from Title II ESEA; these were used for the purchase of educational materials such as books, reference materials and visual aids. The materials were then made available for use by both community members and school pupils.

Other examples which come to mind are the Drug Abuse Education Act which is providing at least one State -- Utah -- with assistance to local school-community programs, And Title III of the Adult Education Act under which

grants to States are channeled to local education agencies for adult education programs. This same act also allows the Commissioner of Education to make discretionary grants to local education agencies, many of which have received funds for adult Right-to-Read programs. These and other adult education programs can be incorporated into a community-school program.

Finally, the recently passed Education Amendments of 1972 include the Emergency School Aid Act, which has an appropriation of about $240 million for Fiscal 1973. Under this provision, grants will be awarded to local education agencies, in defined stages of desegregation, to develop projects designed to ease the problems caused by the desegregation process and to provide equal educational opportunities for all children in such communities. The Assistant Secretary for Education may also make special grants to community groups and others under this same act, and projects developed by local education agencies may include community-school programs.

These amendments provide, moreover, for even further nurturing of community education, particularly in regard to expanded opportunities in career education. The new law affords strengthened occupational preparation, counseling, curricular placement in elementary and secondary schools, and inproved post-secondary occupational education, with special emphasis on the community college.

In fact, and this is something that you should not overlook, there is a great need for both the two-year and the four-year college to work more closely with high schools, particularly with guidance counselors, to steer

students into precollege courses that mesh more systematically with post-secondary offerings in the academic and career fields which students expect to enter. The community college now has an opportunity to assume a leadership role both in post-secondary education for the young and in continuing education programs that serve the total population.

Community education at its best is a center of learning and activity for every member of the family, with many opportunities for career information and support, perhaps through education of the whole family in a model setting. In many geographic areas, in fact, community education must include literacy classes and courses in basic skills as well as more advanced courses in a variety of subjects.

I think it is safe to say that the community education concept is based on the premise that our current educational system is too inflexible to adapt to the needs of students and society, and that our educational facilities must be refocused to meet the realities of today.

We in the Office of Education share this belief and, as you know, have designated the promotion of career education as our number one priority. We have taken this step, because, like you, we realize that our educational system must be revamped in such a way that it becomes responsive and helpful to every member of every community.

Let me stress therefore that career education does not come with a made-in-Washington label. It is a concept that needs to be tailored to student interests and job opportunities in each region, State, and locality by that region, State, and locality. For example, the career options open to young people in the St. Louis area of the Midwest are considerably different from

those available in Phoenix and the Southwest. Educational offerings and even approaches to learning need to reflect not only these differences in the job markets, but the differing interests and backgrounds of students as well.

Therefore, I think it is plain to see that career education and community education share a number of things in common. This being the case, you should be interested in hearing about one approach that could be useful in establishing a community education and/or career education program. You can begin by establishing lay councils that include people from the business community, labor, Government, civic and minority interests. Such persons can be extremely helpful in a number of ways.

First, they can assist you in making projections of what the local and regional job markets will look like 5, 10 or 15 years from now, in terms of new occupational fields and in terms of skills that will be obsolete by then.

Secondly, they can help you to reshape curriculums to reflect the changing labor picture. This could include active participation by council members and anyone else they can recruit to give students first-hand information on what life is really like as a labor leader, State legislator, architect, automobile dealer, etc.

Thirdly, they could work to stimulate industry and labor within the community to work closely with schools and colleges in helping young people get into career fields for which they are trained.

This type of approach is being successfully carried out in the St. Louis area, where communities and industries have joined forces to launch an annual Career Education campaign. The first of these campaigns was carried on in

1971 under the auspices of the Regional Industrial Development Corporation, and it attracted over 25,000 youngsters to a Career Fair where 100 corporations exhibited.

Finally, the type of lay council which I have suggested can work to generate support both at city hall and in the State legislature for additional funds you may need for the project.

Again I would like to stress that career education does not bear the perhaps too familiar "made-in-Washington" label, but rather is a concept that you can design and shape until in plainly says "made-in-Houston," "made-in-Evanston" or made in whatever other city or town you happen to live in. This same statement is even truer of community education.

In conclusion then, what I have been trying to impress upon you today is that the Office of Education and the Federal Government as a whole is taking note of, is enthusiastic about, and is supporting in a wide variety of ways the community school movement. And as members of the National Community School Education Association you have much to be proud of in this regard. During the short lifetime of your organization, you have seen the community school concept emerge from its infancy and blossom into young adulthood.

In 1964 -- two years before the inception of your organization -- the idea of community education was identified with and embraced by a mere handful of school districts. By last year, there were 1,920 community schools, involving over 1.7 million persons and spending over $32 million. Six States -- Michigan, Utah, Florida, Washington, Maryland, and Minnesota --

have appropriated funds to help pay salaries of local community education coordinators, and seven more are giving favorable consideration to similar legislation. In Utah and Minnesota a position titled State coordinator of community education has been established in the State Department of Education.

These achievements can only be looked upon as a great tribute to the work and the interest of those of you before me today, as well as the thousands of concerned citizens in communities throughout the country. Through your knowledge, expertise and leadership, you have demonstrated once again for all of us the effictiveness of a grassroots effort, and at the same time you have broadened the expectations of thousands of our citizens for whom the school had come to be the symbol of failure.